



# OMBUDSMAN JOURNAL



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## **A Farewell Letter from an Ombudsman-at-Large**

By Sharon Herdt

Dear Fellow Ombudsmen,

Let me begin by thanking FamilyLine for this opportunity to communicate with all my fellow Ombudsmen. The volunteers at FamilyLine welcomed me into their family. They truly helped me grow in ways I never knew were possible. As one of the best organizations helping ombudsmen and all who make up our Navy family, let me take this opportunity to say thank you for all of us.

My journey, as a Navy spouse began in 1968, as an ombudsman in 1981, and as Ombudsman-at-Large in 1998. In the beginning, Jim, my husband and your present Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, (MCPON,) was not making the Navy a career. Since then, we have moved seventeen times, lived in ten states, and I have had fifteen different paying positions. In 1974 we actually left the Navy, and Jim attended college, joined the Naval Reserves, and then returned to active duty two years later. After thirty-five years he is now beginning to seriously consider making the Navy a career. Please, forgive my humor.

I trained and then served as an Ombudsman for the USS Cincinnati (SSN 693) from 1981 to 1983. At that time, the Ombudsman program had no traditions in place. There were no graduation ceremonies. Typi-



cally, your Ombudsman certificate was mailed to you. No Ombudsman Appreciation Day existed, and there were no luncheons, nor funding for many supplies. My supplies consisted of my telephone, some paper, and a space to copy and assemble the newsletter. In those beginning days, not all commands had an Ombudsman, and the support for those who did was addressed as breaking new ground.

Hundreds of us, without knowing, laid the foundation for the program of today. We showed the Navy the value of the program by helping to relieve many of the family pressures within the command and freeing our Sailors to work and deploy knowing that help is only a phone call away for their families.

The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Johnson, appointed me as his Ombudsman-at-Large in March of 1998. Before I tell you about my duties as defined by CNO Johnson, let me share some history about the evolution process for the position.

In 1967 the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the

*(See Farewell letter on page 4)*

### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

A Farewell Letter	1,4
Notes from the Fleet	2,5-6
Bupers Forum	3
Field Reps	7
Ombudsman Newsletters	7
Misc Information	8

# NOTES FROM THE FLEET:

## Is there life after Ombudsman Basic Training?

### By Samantha Hand

*Editors note: This is a new series we are trying out. Please let us know your comments! Nsfamline@aol.com*

As a BUPERS certified trainer I meet new ombudsmen when they come to Basic Training. I get to know them and continue to network with them as we attend assembly meetings and advanced training classes. But I often wondered what was happening later on down the road. Why do volunteers step up in the first place? Do ombudsmen continue to serve as they move from duty station to duty station? Are there differences in the job based on duty station, location, or community? I interviewed three ombudsmen from Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. They represent Ship, Shore and Training communities. They answered my questions and asked a few questions as well.

#### **Q. Why did you volunteer to become an Ombudsman?**

- A. *Grace...* I picked up the neighborhood newsletter and read that the current ombudsman was resigning. I thought, "What ombudsman?" I didn't even know our command had an ombudsman. I met with the CO and turned in my resume. She sent me in to chat with the XO and when I came out of the office the CO said, "OK, what can we do for you?" I sort of had an idea of what ombudsmen do so I asked, "Why don't we have a wives group or food locker?" The XO challenged me to put a positive spin on the questions and pretty soon we had support group and food locker programs up and running.
- A. *Cindy...* I just wanted to help the wives. I had already been a Family Support Group President and wanted to do more for Navy Families.
- A. *Melissa...* For me this is a two part answer. First, as a new Navy Spouse, I wanted to learn as much about the Navy as I could. Second, I like to educate people. When I researched the ombudsman program, I thought, "here is what I can do." As a new Navy spouse in Sasebo, Japan, I had been there all of 6 days, I literally went from office to office asking, "What can you do for me and what can I do for you?" This is how I learned about the ombudsman program. The next thing you know, my husband came home from work one day and said, "The CO is looking for an Ombudsman and I think you would do a great job." I had already done the research and knew that it would be something I was interested in, so I volunteered.

#### **Q. How much training did you receive before you became an ombudsman?**

- A. *Grace...* None. I started in November and the training was not available until January, two months later.
- A. *Cindy...* The current ombudsman gave me a copy of the ombudsman manual as soon as the CO let us know that I was going to be appointed. I had it available as a resource for about a month before I started ombudsman basic training. The current ombudsman and I sat down and discussed the manual and training guide. She even had me mark important pages in the manual such as the code of ethics, the 5 reportables and the section about confidentiality.
- A. *Melissa...* I was appointed two months before Basic Training was available, but the command gave me the manual when they gave me the appointment letter. In Sasebo, they have to bring in trainers from out of town to teach Ombudsman Basic Training so sometimes we have to wait a few months before training is offered.

#### **Q. How many years have you served as an ombudsman?**

- A. *Grace...* 2 years and 8 months.
- A. *Cindy...* I have been an ombudsman for 6 months.
- A. *Melissa...* I have been an Ombudsman for three and a half years.

## BUPERS FORUM

by Rocky Whray, Ombudsman Program Manager

### OMBUDSMEN - TRAINED PROFESSIONALS

From my perspective, the cornerstones of a successful Ombudsman program are a desire to serve, professional training, and effective execution of the Ombudsman duties. From my experience, a desire to serve and support members of our Navy family is what brings a volunteer to the Ombudsman program. However, training is the linchpin that prepares the Ombudsman and allows for the professionalism that is absolutely critical to a successful command program.

The initial training is not necessarily the Ombudsman Basic Training (OBT) course. It can be training received via other venues and from personal experience. Of course, OBT is the first formal training designed for the Ombudsman program. It establishes the foundation necessary for the volunteer to gain specific information and tools that will translate into what our families need, when they need it. And, it is required by all Ombudsmen before they can be certified to serve as a command Ombudsman.

Advanced, or continuing training, is determined in the local area. The Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) and/or local Ombudsman Assembly, decide what additional training topics are available and appropriate and is made available to all local Ombudsmen. It can be classes held at the FFSC or may be included during an Assembly meeting. A good source for topics and training information is the LifeLines organization Website at [www.lifelines2000.org](http://www.lifelines2000.org).

At this time, there is no requirement to participate in OBT more than once. However, if it has been several years since you were certified, you are transferring from a shore duty

command to one that deploys, or you just feel that you could use a refresher, please consider contacting the FFSC and signing up for OBT. Not only will this help you but your experience will be helpful for newly assigned Ombudsmen taking the course for the first time.

If you are an experienced Ombudsman and believe you would be a good trainer, you may contact the FFSC Ombudsman Coordinator and ask about the Navy Personnel Command Ombudsman Train-the-Trainer course. If you meet the criteria, if your command will fund your participation, and the FFSC recommends you, I will be happy to review your application to attend.

To be good at anything and maintain a requisite level of professionalism, training must never stop. As Information and Referral specialists, it is essential that you maintain current information and techniques. I strongly encourage you to develop a relationship with the FFSC Ombudsman Coordinator to find training opportunities.

I am always impressed by the level of service within our program and can ensure you that senior leadership is aware of what you do and values your service!

Next issue, I will talk about the Ombudsman Code of Ethics. God bless you and God bless America!!!

*"Do not turn back when you are just at the goal".* Publius Syrus



#### Bookmark this SITE!!!

How often do you check the BUPERS Ombudsman Website? When was the last time you looked to see what was new? There is a great Family Benefits Booklet that you can print out for your Command families. There is also a new training area that lists upcoming dates and places for Ombudsman Basic Training. Be sure to check the site at least weekly for changes and additions.

The address is:

[www.persnet.navy.mil/pers66/ombudsman1/index.html](http://www.persnet.navy.mil/pers66/ombudsman1/index.html)

#### Attention Reserve Ombudsmen !

Did you know that there is a website just for you? It can be found at [www.lifelines2000.org/ombudsman/index.asp](http://www.lifelines2000.org/ombudsman/index.asp). Did you also know that there is a place online that you can find a toolkit to help with family readiness? The Guard and Reserve Family Readiness Toolkit is available on the Internet at [www.defenselink.mil/ra/family/toolkit/](http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/family/toolkit/). Be sure to check these websites out soon!

(Farewell letter con't from page 1)

Navy was Master Chief Delbert Black. His title at that time was, "The Office of Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Navy" and the position was to function as liaison between enlisted personnel and the Chief of Naval Personnel, CNP.

Mrs. Ima Black, MCPON Black's spouse, recognized the tremendous potential for extending to Navy wives a communication link similar to that offered to sailors. Referred to then as a "dependent wife", Ima was not authorized to fill this need. She would, however, at gatherings in Washington see and hear information to pass on to her husband. Ima would gently tug him away from the officers so he could talk to the enlisted personnel lined up waiting to meet him. MCPON Black's last official trip in 1971 as MCPON was the first time Mrs. Black received funding for traveling with him.

In 1971 Mrs. Helen Whittet, spouse of the second MCPON, received authorization from the CNO, Admiral Zumwalt, to travel with her husband to Navy Wives Club meetings, gatherings with Chiefs' wives, and to talk with other enlisted wives. CNO Zumwalt was a leader who cared about families. He understood that Navy wives were not issued in a Sailor's seabag, but that they should be recognized as key factors in a married sailor's choice to stay or get out of the Navy. It is wonderful he lived to see what he began and what you have so well served, blossom into one of our Navy's greatest successes.

In 1979 Mrs. Carol Crow's, spouse of our fourth MCPON, schedule was separate from her husbands as she visited Navy wives, groups, commissaries, exchanges, medical facilities and Navy Family Service Centers. She relayed her findings to the CNO and CNP. As unofficial ombudsman, her perspective was sought by other flag officers and their spouses.

Mrs. Karen Plackett, spouse of our sixth MCPON, was the first to receive the official title of Ombudsman-at-Large in 1988. She was not, however, authorized to travel without MCPON Plackett.

All the MCPON spouses, not mentioned in the article, have their own stories which added to the respect and growth of the position. Voluntary efforts, from the Ombudsman-at-Large, have been and will be made to raise the standard of living for the enlisted community.

As one of the current Ombudsmen-at-Large, I am free to travel with or without my husband, the ninth MCPON. As defined by the CNO, Admiral Johnson, in 1998, I advise the Chief of Naval Operations and the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy on matters affecting our Sailors. These include, but are not limited to morale, retention, career enhancement, separation, family services, and programs pertaining to command sponsorship, exceptional family members, family advocacy, and the general well being of the enlisted personnel active and reserve, single and married, and their family members. As I travel I meet with Commanding Officers, Executive Officers, Command Master Chiefs and Command Ombudsmen to ensure I get a clear understanding of issues while providing information in response to their questions regarding current programs, policies, and initiatives.

You may be interested to know what doors are open to

the Ombudsman-at-Large. I have met two Secretaries of Defense, three Secretaries of the Navy, two Chief of Naval Personnel Admiral's, and leaders at the Bureau of Personnel. I have had the honor of shaking hands with two Presidents, two Vice Presidents, numerous Senators and Congressmen, Ambassadors, Lady Mary Somes, and The First Sea Lord of the British Navy just to name a few. My access, experiences, and lessons may be somewhat different from yours, however, I am an Ombudsman just like you.

I describe these four years as the highest highs and the lowest lows of my marriage except for the blessing of our son. When I break it down into the two most important things I have learned is first, that our leadership and their spouses here in Washington truly care about all who make up the Navy family, and they work day and night for us. Secondly, our future is in good hands. Our young officers and enlisted are seeking success and love this country. My three lows have been the death of my father-in-law, the death of our first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, Delbert Black, and the September 11th tragedy.

My final thought to leave with you is - pull together through your Navy experience as brothers and sisters. Come together for a common cause with respect, patience, and seek to change others by example. Educate fellow spouses with the pride and traditions of the Navy, and share your experiences. Live your life with pride, learn from your mistakes, be honest, listen, and learn what questions to ask in order to get the correct answers.

People want love, respect, success (defined their way), and dignity. As we retire after thirty-five years, I close by wishing you peace, joy, and love. It has been a privilege and honor to work for you. Jim always signs off on his "MCPON Minute" spots by saying, "I'll see you about the fleet." Let me just say, I'll see you about the aisles of the malls.

Sharon Herdt, Ombudsman-at-Large  
Spouse of the Ninth Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy



*Editors note: FamilyLine is very grateful for all of the support, time and effort Sharon has given to our organization. She has attended meetings, given input and guidance and been there when needed. She truly has had the interests of Sailors and their families in her heart and we will all miss working with her. FamilyLine wishes the Herdts fair winds and following seas in the new chapter of their lives.*

(Notes from the Fleet can't from page 2)

**Q. Have you volunteered at any other locations than Peal Harbor?**

A. *Grace...* I was the ombudsman at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. I worked for two different Commanding Officers. I have only served as a West Coast Ombudsman.

A. *Cindy...* I have only just started here in Hawaii. This is the first CO I have been an ombudsman for.

A. *Melissa...* I have been an Ombudsman in Sasebo, Japan and Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. I was an ombudsman for a total of three commands and five different commanding officers. I am also a BUPERS Certified Ombudsman Trainer.

**Q. Are there any differences in doing the job in CONUS vs OCONUS? Ship vs Shore etc?**

A. *Grace...* I have only served as a west coast shore duty ombudsman.

A. *Cindy...* I have just started out as an ombudsman. I am an "afloat command ombudsman." I can tell you the job is very different from what I did as a support group president. It is different from what I ever imagined it would be.

A. *Melissa...* I came from an overseas deployed command to a Pearl Harbor shore command. First of all, an ombudsman needs to realize that *they personally* are going to go through culture shock. Especially if deployed to Asia as opposed to Europe. There are major differences in the resource information you would provide to the command families. In some cases you actually have more resources overseas. For example the Family Management Assistance Team that is available in Japan; it is an additional resource that goes along with the sponsor program. They do far more than stateside sponsors do. MWR is larger overseas and is more involved with the commands even if deployments are only 90 days.

Depending on where you are located, you may only have a telephone number as opposed to a local Red Cross office. You may be working more with the International Red Cross in conjunction with the American Red Cross to provide information such as Birth or Death notifications.

On the other hand, you may lack some local resources you are used to in CONUS such as food stamp programs, family abuse shelters, civilian doctors and professional counselors. Ombudsmen will have to find out what "on base" agencies provide these services to command families. For ombudsman-specific things such as printing your newsletter, you may have to find an on base resource instead of one of the big commercial franchise print and copy shop the last duty station had.

At an overseas assignment you may also be asked to do things like start support groups or be part of the sponsor or welcome aboard program that do things like drop off information or welcome packets at the hotel where command families are staying.

**Q. In your opinion, what is the most important part of the Ombudsman program?**

A. *Grace...* Open communication between the Ombudsman and the CO. Well...CO accessibility in general. Communication is the most essential part of the program. The ombudsman is the liaison between the families and the CO, but if the CO is not available then the ombudsman may feel they are up against a brick wall. Sure you have a POC but sometimes things just have to go straight to the CO.

A. *Cindy...* I wish I could answer this from an Ombudsman point of view, I am still very new to the program. I have learned that the command is actually easier to communicate with than I had thought. All I have to do is say, "this is the ombudsman" and they will connect me directly to the CO or POC.

A. *Melissa...* Again a two part answer; (1) the most important part of the ombudsman program is just the fact that it actually exists and that the Navy recognized the needs of the families and how these needs could be met by the development of the program

(2) The most important part of the program itself, is the code of ethics. Supporting the command's mission, working within the chain of command, maintaining confidentiality, maintaining the highest professional standards...and how the Ombudsmen are trained to clearly understand and work within this framework.

(See Notes from the Fleet on page 6)



(Notes from the Fleet can't from page 5)

**Q. What is the most difficult part of the Ombudsman program ?**

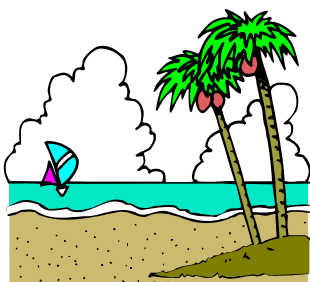
- A. *Grace...* closing the book and walking away. There are some situations that you have no problem turning over to the CO but other times you wonder or you worry, and you want to follow up but know you can't.
- A. *Cindy...* I think obtaining resources is difficult. You want to provide the most current information to the families. You really have to network and get to know the other ombudsmen as well as the local community and navy resources office staff so you can provide good information to the command families. Also, waiting for a problem to be resolved or even to be acted upon is difficult. First of all, I don't have a lot of patience. I want the problems resolved for our families QUICK, FAST and EASY, but all I can do is reassure them that things are going to work out in time.
- A. *Melissa...* The most difficult part for me is remembering the whole time that you are the ombudsman, not just when you are on the phone with the families. Then, finding a way to shut it off, let it go and not put myself in the boat with them. Even though I cognitively know that I have done everything I could do, the brain and the heart still want to do more. That is the hardest part, you don't want to become an enabler.

**Q. If there was one thing you could change about being an ombudsman what would it be?**

- A. *Grace...* More Training. ( *Q. Specifically what areas?*) Ombudsman are not counselors and I understand that. However, there are times that you get a call where you are having to deal with issues concerning child abuse, suicide, neglect etc. I get off the line and I wonder if the person going to dial the resource I gave them? Other times, the person doesn't want a referral as much as they need someone to listen. Sure we are took the listening skills module and I have no intention of becoming a counselor, however I need some kind of extra education such as hotline or crisis line training. Or something in that field.
- A. *Cindy...* To work closer with the Family Support Groups. I would love for the FSG Presidents to have the same type of opportunities for training and information that the ombudsman have. Of course we have different programs but if they had the training to run the group it would help the FSG's to be more effective for Navy Families and it would take some of the load off the ombudsman. We could spend more time assisting individual families as opposed to training FSG volunteers. A lot of CO's seem to think the ombudsman or Key Volunteer can do both jobs at the same time.
- A. *Melissa...* Only one change? Ok, the thing that matters the most - that would be our manual and training. My change would be to give the ombudsman and command the most comprehensive and yet easy to understand manual NOW! The current manual is unwieldy and outdated. We've heard the "been working on it" for years. When do we get the new one? It is frustrating as a deck plate ombudsman and now a trainer; there are so many things that are not addressed such as technology changes and internet usage. We need a manual that is more streamlined. One book for everyone, CO, Ombudsman & FFSC so that we are all operating from the same page.

**Thank you so much for your time and your input for the Ombudsman Journal!**

The next set of interviews in this series will cover the differences in programs found in the shore, surface, sub and air communities. It's one big Navy...are we really all that different? Are differences region specific or community specific? If there are other questions that you would like to see addressed in the interviews, please forward them to nsfamline@aol.com and put "OJ questions" in the subject line.



Best Wishes and Aloha!  
Samantha Hand  
Command Family Ombudsman & BUPERS Certified  
Trainer



## FIELD REPRESENTATIVES WANTED

Not all volunteers for Naval Services FamilyLine work at headquarters in Washington, D.C. There is another group of dedicated individuals who volunteer in Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard communities around the world. These are the FamilyLine Field Representatives.

Through their contacts at Fleet and Family Support Centers, Ombudsman Assemblies, and spouse organizations, field representatives are able to provide their local military community with continuous updated information about FamilyLine and our materials, and, in turn, provide feedback which will enable us to better tailor our services to their needs.

Currently there are many communities without a field representative. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the field representative guidelines, or would simply like to discuss the position, please contact the Director of Field Representatives at Naval Services FamilyLine - 1-877-673-7773 or nsfamline@aol.com.

The following are communities **with** field representatives:

Annapolis  
San Diego  
Honolulu  
San Francisco  
Yokosuka  
Guam  
La Maddelena  
Bahrain  
Pensacola  
Brunswick  
United Kingdom  
Jacksonville  
Little Creek  
Minneapolis  
Fallon  
Bangor, WA

Please be sure to pass the word around to your Command Families as well. This is a good way to involve someone in helping others.



FamilyLine  
Wishes you a  
Happy Valentine's Day!

## SEND US YOUR NEWSLETTERS!!

The Ombudsman Journal wants to see what **YOU** are doing in your Ombudsman Newsletters. You can mail them to us at Naval Services FamilyLine, 1254 9th Street, SE Suite 104, Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5067 or email them to us at nsfamline@aol.com.

We have gotten newsletters from the following Command Ombudsmen:

USS Constellation (CV-64)  
USS Harpers Ferry (LSD-49 )  
USS Laboon (DDG-58)  
USS John S. McCain (DDG-56)  
USS Maryland (SSBN-738) (B)  
NAWMU-1 (Guam)  
USS Ogden (LPD-5)  
USS Philadelphia (SSN-690)  
USS Portsmouth (SSN-707)  
USS Taylor (FFG-50)  
USS Vincennes (CG-49)

So where is **YOUR** command listed???  
Please send those newsletters!



Easter is early this year!  
March 31, 2002



Did you know that anything that is printed in the *Ombudsman Journal* can be used in your own Ombudsman Newsletter? Well, it can! Feel free to copy articles or news items from the *Ombudsman Journal*. Just be sure to give credit to the author (list who it's written by.) If you want to give credit to the publication just say that the article is from Naval Services FamilyLine's *Ombudsman Journal*.

**"Whoever renders service to many puts himself in line for greatness—great wealth, great return, great satisfaction, great reputation, and great joy." -**  
Jim Rohn

**The finest gift you can give anyone is encouragement. Yet almost no one gets the encouragement they need to grow to their full potential. If everyone received the encouragement they needed to grow, the genius in most everyone would blossom and the world would produce abundance beyond the wildest dreams. We would have more than one Einstein, Edison, Schweitzer, Mother Theresa, Dr. Salk and other great minds in a century." -** Sidney Madwed



**FAMILYLINE IS  
HERE FOR YOU!**



We are here to help you and all of the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard families! Please let your Command families know about FamilyLine and that we are great resource for information. If we don't know an answer we can tell you who will! Be sure to email or call us with your questions! Nsfamline@aol.com or TOLL-FREE 1-877-673-7773

## **NAVAL SERVICES FAMILYLINE Ombudsman Network Advisory Committee**

Navy-Wide Ombudsman-at-Large  
Chairman, Naval Services FamilyLine

Navy-Wide Ombudsman-at-Large,  
MCPON Spouse

Navy Ombudsman Program Manager PERS662e2  
Director, NavRes Ombudsman Program  
NavResFor Ombudsman-at-Large  
SgtMaj, USMC Spouse  
HQMC Key Volunteer Coordinator  
USCG Ombudsman Coordinator  
Ombudsman Coordinator, NS FamilyLine  
Editor, Ombudsman Journal

**Naval Services FamilyLine** is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for sea service families. All Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard spouses are automatic members and no dues are required.

**Our mission is to empower Sea Service families to meet the challenges of a military lifestyle with information and resource assistance.**

**Naval Services FamilyLine** volunteers provide assistance, information or referral in all matters pertaining to the military or its lifestyle, and its chairman serves as one of the Chief of Naval Operations' Navy-wide Family Ombudsmen-at-Large. Naval Services FamilyLine also produces and provides informational booklets, and coordinates educational seminars. Volunteers are at the office Monday through Friday from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm eastern time.

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**On-line Homepage Address:**

<http://www.lifelines2000.org/familyline>

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